

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

A very broad and simple definition of an accident would be that it is an unplanned and unwelcome event that interrupts normal activity. Accidents can result in no damage or injury (*Near Misses*) as well as cause illness, disease, injuries, damage to equipment and property. The investigation of "Near misses" can be very important as they can help to ensure action is taken to prevent the more serious consequences of continued failure and assist in the identification of trends. Most accidents are preventable or their effects can be minimised by reasonable precautions, in reality, few accidents can be attributable to 'bad luck'.

Legislation is now based on pro-active management of risks and therefore where foreseeable events are identified precautions should be taken to minimise risks where the costs are not disproportionate to the benefit. Reactive monitoring after an event is necessary in order to identify omissions, weaknesses or inadequacies in performance standards. Line managers should carry out such investigations, but where accidents are of a more serious nature or have greater potential consequences, senior levels of management and where necessary, staff from the Health and Safety Section should be involved. Managers should ensure that trade union safety representatives are informed of accidents and incidents to their members since one of their functions is to carry out investigations.

The contributory factors that lead to all accidents fall into one or more of the following categories:

THE ORGANISATION - the working environment including policies, safety rules, systems of work, maintenance standards, supervision, communication etc.

THE JOB - the premises, plant provided, design of tools and equipment, job requirements, work patterns and use of substances etc.

THE PERSONS - this includes their behaviour, age, fitness, suitability and competence in carrying out the work.

The four main stages of an investigation are:

1. Gather information and establish facts
2. Isolate the essential contributory factors
3. Determine remedial action (Short and long term)
4. Carry out corrective action.

An investigation should be carried out as soon as practical after an accident or incident since facts can become distorted as time passes. The use of a standard investigation report form can help guide managers through the process and a document is included for this purpose. If anyone is injured obviously the first priority is for their health and well-being. Procedures for dealing with emergencies should be followed to ensure that no one else is put at risk and the injured receive quick and appropriate treatment. The reporting and recording of the accident should then be undertaken (See the Health and Safety Manual, Section 2.02 - Accidents, Diseases & Ill Health Reporting).

Key data which should be gathered during the investigation should include:

- > Details of injured person - age; sex; address; experience; qualifications etc.

- > A description of the circumstances, including day; time; place; working conditions etc.

- > Details of the event, including:
 - Witness statements
 - Any action which led directly to the event
 - The direct causes of any injuries, ill health or other loss
 - The immediate causes of the event
 - The underlying causes - for example failures in systems of control, failures in management or supervision; lack of competence; inadequate training; inadequate performance standards; or failure to address human factors.

- > Details of the outcomes including in particular:
 - The nature of the outcome - for example injuries, or ill health to employees or members of the public; damage to property; process disruptions; emissions to the environment; creation of hazards;
 - The severity of the harm caused including injuries, ill health and losses;
 - The immediate management response to the situation and its adequacy - for example was it dealt with promptly? Were continuing risks dealt with adequately? Was the first aid response adequate? Were emergency procedures followed? Was the event preventable, if so how?

Where major injuries have occurred officers from the Health and Safety Section may wish to investigate the incident with the manager or visit the site at a later date. If officers do visit then it is important to clear with them whether it is permissible to disturb the site after an internal investigation since they may require photographs or wish to draw diagrams, or indeed preserve the scene for Health and Safety Executive Inspectors.

To prevent a recurrence of an accident or incident something may have to change. Recommendations must be clearly communicated to all concerned with a timetable for implementation. In some instances intermediate measures might have to be deployed until such time as work can be carried out or items purchased. Any precautionary measures should be monitored to establish their adequacy.

When management reacts swiftly and positively to accidents and injuries this reaffirms its commitment to the safety and well being of employees and other service users.



**ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL
ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT HS2.01**

Date of Incident:	Time:.....
Date of Investigation:.....	Time:.....
Name of Work Place Manager.....	
Location of Incident.....	

Members of Investigation Team
.....
.....

Details of Injured Person(s)
.....
.....

Details of Injuries
.....
.....
Check <input type="checkbox"/> Lost Time <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Treatment <input type="checkbox"/> None

Details of Damage (Plant/Equipment/Property)
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Description of Accident/Incident
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